

Transformative communication & responses to dis-information that shaping the long term management of the Great Barrier Reef



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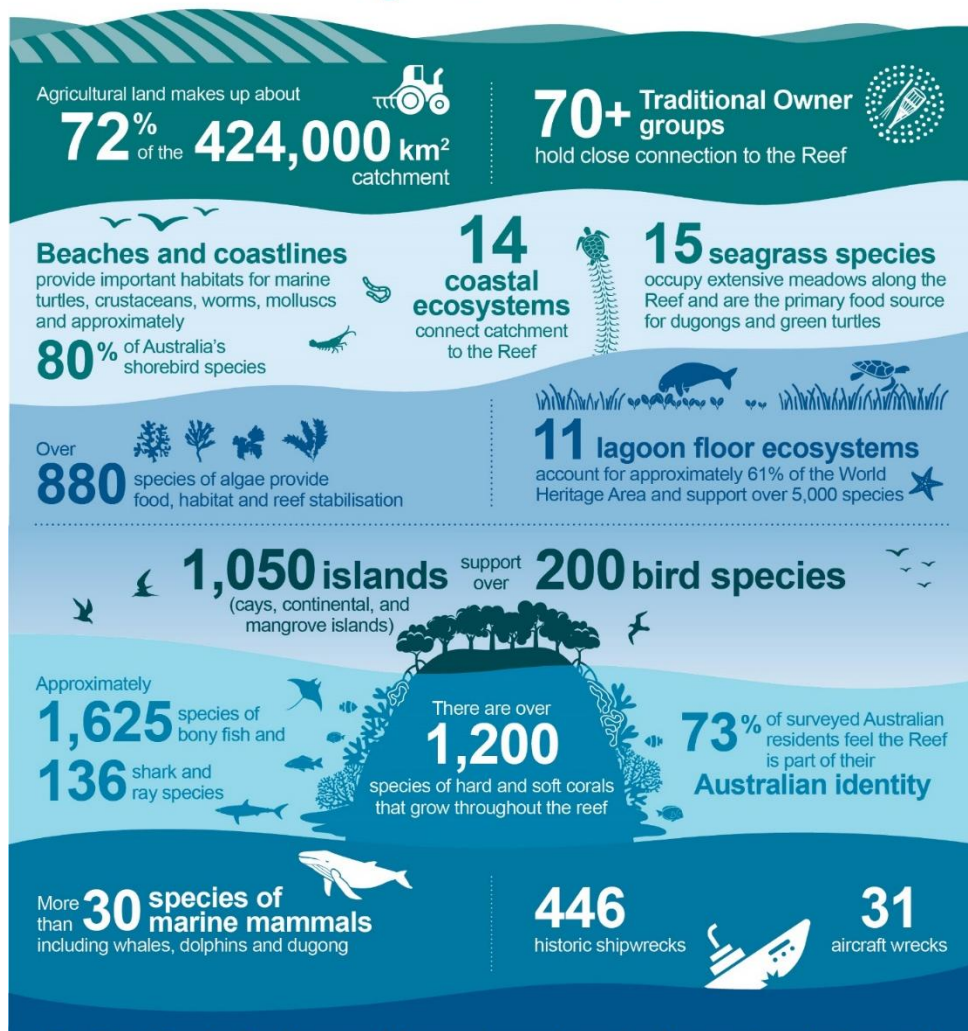


Introduction

In 2011 the UNESCO World Heritage Committee found that Australia had approved LNG processing facilities on Curtis Island and urged the State Party to undertake a comprehensive strategic assessment of the entire property, identifying planned and potential future developments and enabling a Long Term Sustainability Plan.



Key Reef facts





The key reports and decisions

2011	State Party Report: Australian Government report on management actions and emerging threats to the Great Barrier Reef.
2011	UNESCO World Heritage Committee Decision 35COM 7B.10 (2011)
2014	Strategic Assessment of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Comprehensive evaluation prepared by the Australian Government
2014	Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report (2014): Official assessment by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on ecosystem health and pressures.
2014	UNESCO World Heritage Committee Decision 38COM 7B.63 (2014): Follow-up concerns and recommendations about the Reef's protection and management.
2015	Australian Government Response to World Heritage Committee Recommendations Summary of actions taken to address Committee's concerns.
2015 - 2050	Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan (2015): Framework developed in consultation with the World Heritage Centre to address threats and ensure ongoing protection.

Model of engagement

- There was clarity about the problems and what kinds of things we could do
- Our approach was based on principles, without any micro - management
- We pitched the 'level' right for people. And we stayed there. We didn't go down into the weeds.
- Governance showed we were a team, & none of us could do it alone due to the property boundaries
- We had a game plan, and we worked together well and for years
- We always went together





Shared key messages

Urgency: The Reef's condition is deteriorating, and urgent action is required to address both local and global threats.

Accountability: Australia is under international scrutiny and must demonstrate effective management and transparent reporting.

Values: We identified the values from a socio ecological perspective – as an example, prioritising the whole system of resilience around the turtle, not just the turtles

Threats: Water quality and climate change are driving the condition of the Reef. Australia can act on water quality by working with Ports, Farmers and catchment communities to reduce run-off. Global action on climate change is needed

Collaboration: Success depends on coordinated efforts between government, industry, communities, and international partners.

Long-Term Vision: The Reef 2050 Plan represents a commitment to sustained protection, and its effectiveness will depend on implementation and ongoing review



Reef 2050 priorities

- **Limit the impacts of climate change** by contributing to global efforts to reduce emissions and supporting the Reef and communities to adapt.
- Improve water quality by working with landholders, industries and communities to accelerate action to **reduce the impacts from land-based activities**.
- **Reduce impacts from water-based activities** by strengthening partnerships with Reef industries and delivering strong marine park management.
- **Influence the reduction of international sources of impact** to reduce marine debris entering the Reef from outside Australia and protect migratory species.
- **Protect, rehabilitate and restore** Reef habitat, species and heritage sites by minimising impacts from disturbances and assisting with their recovery.

UNESCO WHC legacy

The ongoing updates and transparent reporting required by the GBR LTSP have continued to shape the Committee's assessments and recommendations

Decision texts reference the need for comprehensive, forward-looking strategies—such as adaptive management frameworks, stakeholder engagement, and climate resilience measures—to ensure the enduring protection of marine ecosystems.

In 2016, the Committee encouraged States Parties to develop and implement long term sustainability plans for marine World Heritage sites, highlighting the necessity of addressing climate change impacts, overfishing, and pollution through coordinated efforts. Decision Notice: [WHC/16/40.COM/7B](#)

The 2019 decisions underscored the significance of community involvement in sustainability planning, noting that inclusive governance and ongoing monitoring are critical to maintaining ecological integrity. Decision Notice: [WHC/19/43.COM/7B](#)

In 2022, the Committee called for enhanced international cooperation and the adoption of best-practice models for long term marine conservation, explicitly mentioning the integration of scientific research and traditional knowledge into planning processes. Decision Notice: [WHC/22/45.COM/7B](#)

International legacy



2016

Belize Barrier Reef (Belize)
Integrated management,
climate adaptation,
stakeholder consultation



2019

Socotra Archipelago
(Yemen)
Community involvement,
inclusive governance,
traditional knowledge



2019

Sundarbans (Bangladesh)
Community-based
management, adaptive
monitoring, stakeholder
engagement



2022

Wood Buffalo National
Park (Canada)
Co-management,
scientific research,
traditional knowledge,
international cooperation



2022

Belize Barrier Reef (Belize)
Best-practice models,
climate resilience,
international
collaboration



Australian legacy



Shared single narrative about the state of the reef based on monitoring reporting and weekly reports: CSIRO, BoM, AIMS, GBRMPA – triggers and monitoring in real time.



Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements (TUMRAs) engaged and empowered 70 different communities with very different aspirations.



Long Term Sustainability Plan (LTSP) unleashed energy across all levels – ie Low Isles Preservation Group, local government, Landcare groups



COTS program evolved to become an evidence based integrated pest management response – with material impact on coral cover.

Coral replanting has been endorsed and is working



Mechanisms for marine offsets and marine net gain codified and implemented

Nutrient and sediment markets designed, piloted and embedded
National environmental law reform (EPBC act)



Great Barrier Reef Foundation - \$400m initial investment



International scrutiny – & the socio-political environment means the LTSP has been “sticky” as something that guides everybody’s work.





Let's continue the conversation!

Message me your questions or comments in the IAIA26 app.

Thank you to those who contributed to this paper: Russell Reichelt, Ian Poiner, Josh Gibson, Carolyn Cameron, Mel Cowlshaw, Fanny Douvère

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